

EXPLANATION OF THE BOOK

حَلِيَّةُ طَالِبِ الْعِلْمِ

'The Etiquette Of Seeking Knowledge'

By Shaykh Bakr Aboo Zayd

Explanation by
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POINT THREE, p34: His saying: "a scholar cannot be considered a scholar"

Explanation

Means here a knowledgeable person - *Rabbaani*, as for being a knowledgeable person in opposition to being an ignorant person. This is said: The one who compiled the book "*Al Munjad*" is a Christian and he has great knowledge of Arabic language. Even though there are a great number of mistakes in it and things that go against him from aspects of the religion. But a knowledgeable person that acts upon his knowledge is truly known as a "*Rabbaani*"¹ because he trains himself first, then others second.

So acting upon the knowledge is a must, because if he does not act upon his knowledge then he will be of those who are first being dragged into the fire.²

A poet said:

"The scholar that does not act upon his knowledge will be punished before those that worshipped idols"

If he does not act upon his knowledge he will inherit failure in his knowledge and no blessings in it and forgetfulness.

This is the meaning of Allaah, The Most High's saying:

"So because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard. They change the words from their (right) places and have abandoned a good part of the Message that was sent to them."

[Al-Maa'idah (5):13]

This forgetfulness includes both forgetfulness in mind, and action. It is also forgetfulness in respect of the religion³ and forgetfulness of abandoning.⁴ The word for forgetfulness in Arabic generally means to leave. As for the one who acts upon his knowledge then Allaah increases him in guidance.⁵ This is the meaning of Allaah, The Most High's saying:

"While as for those that accept guidance, he increases their guidance and bestows on them their piety." [Muhammad (47): 17]

So Allaah increases him in *Taqwa*,⁶ and that is why Allaah then says:

¹ T.N - Another description of '*Rabbaani*' is one who teaches the people the smaller knowledge before the larger. Being a *Rabbaani* is something praised by Allaah (subhaanahu wa ta'aala) as He said: "...and be you all **Rabbaanieen...**" Also Ali Ibn Abee Taalib (radyiallaahu anhu) said "People are of three kinds a scholar (*Rabaani*), a student of knowledge and Rabble."

² T.N - This is based on the hadeeth, three people will be dragged to the hellfire first: a scholar, a mujaahid and one who gave lots of sadaqah. Allaah will ask the scholar: "Why did you attain a great deal of knowledge?" He will reply: "For your sake, O Allaah." Then Allaah will say to him: "Rather you did it so that it would be said so and so is a scholar - is knowledgeable - and it was said, so drag him to the hellfire..."

³ T.N - As mentioned in the verse above.

⁴ T.N - Like the saying "Oh just forget him for now.."

⁵ T.N - and memory as oppose to forgetfulness

⁶ T.N - *Taqwa* is obeying all that Allaah commands and abstaining from his prohibitions as mentioned in the hadeeth of Abu Hurairah when he was asked: "What is *Taqwa*?" He replied: "Have you ever walked down a narrow path where there are thorn bushes on

"... and bestows on them their piety." [Muhammad (47): 17]

If he acts upon his knowledge Allaah gives him Knowledge as long as he does not know (meaning has gaps in his knowledge).

That is why it was reported from Ali Ibn Abbee Taalib (may Allaah be pleased with him) that he said:

"Call out to the knowledge with action and it will either responds or depart."

The same thing was narrated with a different wording:

"The knowledge calls out to action, so it either answers the call or it departs."

This is something clear and easy to understand, because if you act upon your knowledge then you will remember it as long as you act upon it.⁷

By way of example: A man attains knowledge of the description of the prophets prayer from the Sunnah, he then acts upon it every time he prays. Is he going to forget that knowledge? No, because he repeats it often. But if he left the action he would forget it. So this is evidence that acting upon knowledge necessitates remembering of the knowledge.⁸

POINT FOUR: Continual Observance (of Allaah) Adorn yourself with the continual observance of Allaah.....

Explanation

This is imperative, constantly being aware that one is under the watchful eye of Allaah, and this is from the fruits of fearing Allaah. That a person is with Allaah, constantly worshipping Allaah as though he sees Him.⁹ When he stands up for prayer and performs ablution it is as though he is implementing the verse in the Qur'aan:

"O you who believe if you stand for prayers then wash your faces..."
[Al-Ma'idah (5):6]

And when he performs his ablution he does it as though he is watching the Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) perform ablution and saying:

either side of you? That is taqwa." He meant avoiding the pricks from the thorns is like avoiding disobedience to Allaah, and Allaah knows best

⁷ T.N – A beautiful poem is worth mentioning here from Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee (rahimahullaah) were he said: "I complained to Waqee about my lapse in memorisation, he instructed me to abandon sinning, and informed me that knowledge is light from Allaah and the light of Allaah is not given to a sinner."

⁸ T.N – The Jews did just the opposite they did not act upon their knowledge so Allaah made them forget it and cursed them. A very severe warning from Allaah comes in Soorah Mumtahinah where Allaah states: "**A similitude of those who carried the Towrah then they did not act upon it is like a donkey that carries books..**" [Al-Jumu'ah (62):5] Also the saying of Allaah, The Most High: "**O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do, what a great sin it is with Allaah that you say what you do not do.**" [Soorah As-Saff (61): 2-3]

⁹ T.N – This is based on the hadeeth of Jibreel (alayhis-salaam) when he asked the Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) about 'Ihsaan' he replied: "It is to worship Allaah as though you see Him and though you cannot see Him know that He sees you."

"Whoever performs ablution like my ablution....." ¹⁰

His saying: Journeying to your lord between fear and hope

Explanation

This is one of the opinions in this issue. That is, is it formerly upon a person to draw closer to Allaah between fear and hope, or should he fear Allaah more than hope in him, or should it be the opposite, and he hopes more than he fears?

Imaam Ahmad (may Allaah have mercy upon him) says:

"It is incumbent that his fear and hoping are one (balanced) if one was to overwhelm the other then that person would be destroyed."

Then there were some scholars that went into detail and said:

If you were preoccupied being obedient to Allaah, then your hoping should overwhelm, because if you actually implement it, Allaah would accept it from you and lift you degrees higher by it. If however, you were preoccupied in disobedience to Allaah then your fear of Allaah should overwhelm such that you do not fall into it. This is how one should overwhelm the other - in accordance to the condition of the person.

From other scholars there were those that explained it in another manner and said:

It depends upon the condition of the person, so it was said, as for the one in a condition of sickness, then the hoping should overwhelm, because the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said:

"Let none of you die, except that he has a good thought about his lord" ¹¹

This is because if fear was to overwhelm him in such a situation of sickness, then that may push him to lose hope in the mercy of Allaah. As for in the times of good health, then fearing Allaah should overwhelm, because good health is called to corruption as a wise poet once said;

"Indeed youth, spare time, and novelties are corruption for a person, great corruption." ¹²

That which I see correct is that a person must deal with his condition in accordance to his needs. The closest opinion to the truth is that, if he is doing good deeds then hoping should overwhelm him, and if he is preoccupied with disobedience then let him be overwhelmed by fear, this is what I see to be the best position in this dangerous and great issue.¹³

¹⁰ Ahmad, An-Nasaa'i, Abu Dawood, and it is in Saheeh Al Jaami (6176)

¹¹ Abu Dawood, Ahmad, and in Saheeh al Jaami (7792)

¹² T.N – Ibnu Abbaas (radiyallaahu anhu) said: The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) was giving an exhortation or advice to a man, so he said to him: "Take benefit from five before five: your life before your death, your health before your illness, your spare time before you get busy, your youth before your old age and your wealth before your times of poverty." [Haakim 4/306] Also: "Two blessings that most people do not take heed of, health and spare time." [Bukhaaree 11/229,6412]

¹³ T.N – Dangerous because one could over depend upon the mercy of Allaah and accumulate sin, and lose hope in Allaah's mercy then disbelieve. As in the hadeeth of Ibnu Abbaas when the Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said to him "Whoever says La

If a person says: Overwhelming of hope is it a must that it is built upon a pure/sincere reason for hope, or can it be a hope like that of the bankrupt. The answer is the former.

For example a man disobeys Allaah constantly and says: The mercy of Allaah is wide, expanse. This is wrong, because having a good thought about Allaah and hoping in Him is conditional upon a reason to build this good thought and hoping on. Otherwise it is just a false sense of security or wishing, as the general people of An Najd say: "Wishing is the capital (money) of the bankrupts" ¹⁴

POINT FIVE: Lower your wing, and put arrogance and pride behind you.... Adorn yourself with personnel etiquette....

Explanation

Because this station dictates that a student of knowledge will have abstinence from what the people have, and he will be modest and not look at the haraam, he will have gentleness and not be quick to punish one who does him wrong, and he will have patience during the trials that come to him from what he hears about himself, from the general people, his contemporaries, his teachers, so he should exercise patience and hope for reward and forgiveness.

Humbleness to the truth includes humbleness to the creation. So he should humble himself to the truth which means; when the truth becomes clear to him he submits to it and does not look for an alternative to it. And humbleness to the creation means accepting the truth from others. How many times has a student benefited his teacher by reminding him of something which had not come to his mind, and there was no jealousy felt by the teacher and no low opinion thought of the teacher.

His saying...And tranquility (by displaying awe, self possession, lowering ones wings.....

Explanation

This is also another adornment for a student of knowledge that he abstains from fickleness, whether it is whilst walking or dealing with people, and he should not indulge in boisterousness which kills the heart and removes dignity. He should bear the humility of adorning himself with manners that are befitting for a student of knowledge.

His saying: bearing the humility of learning for the glory of knowledge...

Explanation

Ilaaha Illa Allaah will enter paradise." Ibnu Abbaas said: "Should I not give glad tiding to the people?" The Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said: "No, because they will be lazy in their religion"

¹⁴ T.N – The Bankrupt is the one who is the greatest loser, as in the hadeeth of Abu Hurairah: "Do you know who the greatest loser (bankrupt) is?" We said: "Yes, the one who has no wealth and no belongings." He said: "It is the one who comes to Allaah with salaat, fasting, hajj, etc but he lied against this one, slandered that one, shed the blood of this one and so on... then his good deeds will be taken from him and given to those he oppressed, and if that is not sufficient for them their bad deeds will be taken from them and placed on him until they are made to enter the paradise and he is thrown in the hellfire." [Muslim]

This is good, meaning, if you were to humble yourself for learning you will then search for the glory of this knowledge. Then the humbleness will be attained by knowledge and will produce good fruits.

His saying....Therefore be aware of all (the evil qualities) that oppose these qualities.....

Explanation

Suggestions of arrogance and pride to mankind, and of course students of knowledge....this man has a lot of wealth, this man has a good ideas. Every blessing which Allaah has bestowed upon a slave could come as suggestions of haughtiness.

Pride is: being amazed with oneself with manifestation of that apparently on the body. As it is mentioned in the hadeeth:

"Whoever drags his thawb arrogantly.." ¹⁵

Being amazed with oneself should take place in the heart only, if it manifests on the body then it is haughtiness, arrogance, and pride.

His saying: For indeed it is hypocrisy and pride.....

Explanation

As for it being pride then that is clear to see, as for his saying that it is hypocrisy then that is because the person is showing something bigger than what it is in reality. This is exactly how a hypocrite is, he appears to be a sincere adviser but he is not that in reality.¹⁶

His saying: Amongst the things that Imaam Ad-Dhahabee narrated in the biography of Amir ibn al Aswad al Ansee....

Explanation

The disease of tyranny or oppression is "pride." The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) explained it clearly, and completely when he said:

"Pride is disdaining the truth (out of self conceit) and contempt for the people" ¹⁷

Disdaining the truth means – repelling it, not accepting it.
Contempt for the people means – belittling them, scornfully,

His saying: "Indeed Pride, and greed, and jealousy were the first sins that Allaah was disobeyed with."

He means by this, as we know the first to disobey Allaah was Shaytaan when Allaah, The Most High, ordered him to prostrate to Aadam (may Allaah's peace be upon him) however pride prevented him from that, he refused and was arrogant and said:

"Shall I prostate to one whom you created from soil"
[Al-Israa' (17):61]

¹⁵ Narrated by Bukhaaree (5784) and Muslim (2085)

¹⁶ T.N – concealing what he truly believes, what he truly is.

¹⁷ Narrated by Muslim (91)

and he said:

"This is the one you preferred over me"
[Al-Israa' (17):62]

and he said:

"I am better than him you created me from fire and you created him from soil" [Al-A'raaf (7):12]

His saying; the first sin which Allaah was disobeyed with.....

Explanation

This is as far as we know, if not then Allaah, glory be to Him, The Most High, said to the angels:

"Verily, I am going to place (mankind) generations after generations on earth." They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, - while we glorify You with praises and thanks (Exalted be You above all that they associate with You as partners) and sanctify You." [Al-Baqarah (2):30]

The people of knowledge say that the angels said this because there was a nation on the earth before Aadam and his children. They used to cause corruption in the earth and spill blood.

Then he mentioned an example in his saying: so your loftiness over your teacher is pride.....

Explanation

Your loftiness over your teacher could be with your tongue and it could also be with irritation, he could be walking with his teacher and strutting, prancing along saying I did this and I did that. Also your non-acceptance of that which will benefit you in regards to the knowledge of pride. Some students have fallen into this, if someone less than him in knowledge informs him of something, he becomes arrogant and rejects it.

His saying: And your shortcoming in practising your knowledge.....

Explanation

We ask Allaah to save us from this, this is a type of arrogance. That one does not act upon his knowledge.

His saying: Knowledge wars against the lofty youth...

Explanation

Meaning that it is not possible for a lofty youth to attain knowledge because knowledge is at war against him just as the flood attacks the high places. This is true about a high place when it is attacked by a flood from the right and the left but it cannot reach it and settle on it.

His saying: So adhere – may Allaah have mercy upon you – to sticking to the ground and pitying yourself ...

Explanation

These phrases are qualities of the salaf, like this one, who was seeking humbleness, not despair of Allaah's mercy. When they see what they are upon they fear and take heed and then such statements come from them. If that were not the case then in the first instance it is upon the person to have a good thought of Allaah even in this situation.

And this is Arafa, the place of submission, humbleness to Allaah and it is the place of seeking forgiveness. Where one should say for example: Allaah did not make easy for me to come to this place except so that he may forgive me then he asks him for forgiveness and Allaah, glory be to Him, The Most High says:

"And your lord said supplicate to me and I will answer you."

[Ghaafir (40):60]

But these types of statements were repeatedly said by the salaf out of humbleness and having a bad thought of the soul not Allaah, glory be to Him, The Most High.

POINT 6: Contentment and Zuhud (Asceticism) Adorn yourself with contentment and asceticism. And the reality of Zuhud is.....¹⁸

Explanation

Adorning oneself with contentment is from the most important qualities of a student of knowledge. He should be content with what Allaah has given him. He should not ask to be of the rich and arrogant, because some students of knowledge and other than them desire to be amongst the ranks of the rich and arrogant so they over burden themselves in expense, in eating, drinking, clothing and furniture, then they sink like them into debt. This is a mistake, upon you is to be content, for that is the best provision for a Muslim.

His saying: And the reality of Zuhud is.....

Explanation

It is as though he meant from the word Zuhud –War'a¹⁹ - because there is War'a and Zuhud²⁰ and Zuhud is a higher station than War'a.

War'a is leaving that which will harm your hereafter, and Zuhud is leaving that which will not benefit your hereafter. There is a difference between them both.

The difference between them both: are the areas where there is no harm and no benefit. War'a is fear of Allaah that does not abstain from this, but Zuhud does.

His saying: it was narrated that Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee (may Allaah have mercy on him), if a person sincerely....

¹⁸ Siyar Al-A'lam An-Nubula (4/534) also the same speech from Shaykhul-Islaam Ibnu Taymiyyah (may Allaah have mercy upon him) in Majmoo al Fatawa (14/160)

¹⁹ Awareness of Allaah, The Most High

²⁰ Asceticism

Explanation

Allaahu Akbar!!! if he said this: I advised the most wisest of people, to be like who?? Like the Zuhaad (ascetic people). This is because the ascetic people are the most wisest people, because they abstain from all that which will not benefit them in the hereafter.

What he meant, may Allaah have mercy upon him, by this statement of his, is that the advice is not to be completely and solely like the Zuhaad all the time. Because advice, Awqaaf²¹ and Bihaat²² and Rahoon²³ and other than that returns to the meaning that is in the custom of the people. So if the wisest person in our customs were the Zuhaad then he would say to be like them, if it were those that displayed the maroo'a²⁴, or waq'aar²⁵, or kar'am²⁶ with their wealth and selves, then he would advise to emulate them.

His saying: It was narrated that when it was said to Mohammed ibn al Hasan ash Shaybanee.....

Explanation

This is because whoever understands transactions will protect himself from the haraam and seeks only the halaal, for indeed this is the Zaahid.

His saying: So upon this the student should be moderate in his lifestyle in a way that does not dishonour him by maintaining himself and those who are dependent upon him so he does not put himself in a position of humility and shame

Our Shaykh Muhammad Al-Ameen Ash-Shanqeetee who died in 17/12/1393 (May Allaah have mercy upon him) took very little of this worldly life and I witnessed this myself, he could not differentiate between notes of the same currency. He once addressed me with his saying: "I have come from the land of Shanqeet²⁷ and with me is a treasure very seldom found in the possession of anyone, and that is contentment. If I wanted high status then I know the way to it but I will not exchange this worldly life for the hereafter and I will not abandon knowledge to strive to achieve worldly desires." So may Allaah have mercy on him, great mercy - Ameen

Explanation

This is the words from Shaykh Shanqeetee (may Allaah have mercy upon him) resembling people of knowledge, they do not desire by that to give themselves credit but they want by it to benefit the creation, and the people to emulate them, and be upon this path. Because we know them, they were not looking for accrediting themselves rather they are the furthest people from that. And he, may Allaah have mercy on him, was as Shaykh Bakr mentioned, from the Zuhaad. If you saw him he would not say except that he was a man from the desert. Even the cloak, you find he wore a normal cloak it had no embroidery.

²¹ T.N – This is a bequeath as a religious endowment

²² T.N - insert

²³ T.N - insert

²⁴ T.N - This is the general actions, manners and character that is accepted amongst the customs of the people. It is one who does not perform anything which opposes the accepted mannerism of those people.

²⁵ T.N – This means awe

²⁶ T.N - This is noble and kindness – with ones wealth of self.

²⁷ Mauritania

Also you find he was not concerned about himself or his thawb being smart and neat, may Allaah have mercy on him.

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